

BC3 welding certificate program to test students' mettle

Grad "struggled" in difficult course, now builds nuclear-powered warships for Navy

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Ty Bowman, a 2016 graduate of Butler County Community College's nine-month welding certificate program, is shown July 12, 2017, near his home in Hampton, Va. Bowman is a structural welder for Newport News Shipbuilding.

(Butler, PA) Like the fighter pilots landing jets on the Navy aircraft carriers he helps to build, welding isn't easy, Ty Bowman says, and takes skill.

Bowman, 20, formerly of West Mifflin, landed his own job at Newport News Shipbuilding six months ago after graduating from Butler County Community College's welding certificate program. The 2015 Trinity Christian School alumnus is now a structural welder living in Hampton, Va., where "each day at the shipyard is a little different," he said.

"Some days we will be welding two pieces of deck or bulkheads together, other days we may be working on the outer shell of the ship, or the tanks inside the ship."

BC3 will offer its fourth welding certificate program in which students will gain the theoretical knowledge and hands-on application to adjoin similar and dissimilar metals, and perform a variety of other tasks associated with welding.

Classes will be held from 4:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, from Sept. 5 through June, at the Butler County Area Vocational-Technical School, 210 Campus Lane, Butler.

Funding may be available for the \$12,999 course through CareerLink and CareerTrack for eligible students, said Kelly (Jordan) McKissick, BC3's coordinator of professional education and certificate programs. A student loan available for professional certification programs can be pursued through SallieMae.

Government: 14,400 new jobs by 2024

Participants must possess a high school diploma or its equivalency. Program requirements include a \$75 fee for vocational screening assessment, to be held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 21, and an employability skills class from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Aug. 28-31. Both will be

held on BC3's main campus. Students must also successfully complete a drug screening and certified background check.

The median salary for welders in 2016 was \$39,390, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. The agency reported nearly 400,000 welding positions nationwide in 2014 and predicted another 14,400 by 2024.

Occupational orientation and safety, principles of welding and welding print reading will be explained in BC3's 600-hour course.

"The blueprint reading coursework that I did at BC3 has also helped," Bowman said. "Each company uses slightly different symbols, but having that general understanding has helped tremendously with being able to properly interpret the blueprints I encounter at work."

Other topics to be covered are visual examination inspection and testing that includes shielded metal arc welding I and II; gas metal, gas tungsten and flux-cored arc welding; pipe welding; thermal cutting processes; and brazing and soldering.

"I try to get my students hands-on as soon as possible," said instructor Tim Shaffer, who is American Welding Society Level II advanced-certified. "I like to use my experiences as a welder and fitter to make my classes more authentic. Typically, the type of people who would strive to become a welder or fitter learn best while doing the tasks."

Grads will be skilled in mild steel welding, instructor says



Tim Shaffer, shown July 12, 2017, in Kittanning, will instruct Butler County Community College's nine-month welding certificate program that begins Sept. 5.

The cost includes class materials and one attempt at two American Welding Society certifications – shielded metal arc welding 1-inch plate 3G/4G combo, "the basic welding skills needed to start a low-level or entry-level position," Shaffer said; and Schools Excelling through National Skills Standard Education Level II credentials. "I show how to take intersecting pipes, cut, fit and weld them together," Shaffer said.

Participants will also attempt American Petroleum Institute certification in shielded metal arc welding vertical downpipe 6G, "a skillset designed to teach how to weld pipe in a proper manner as the gas industry dictates," Shaffer said.

Students can also purchase a \$250 welder's kit through BC3 or elsewhere. The kit is subject to inspection to meet minimum standards required for the certificate.

A graduate who achieves all certifications will have the skills needed to do most any job involving mild steel welding, from basic to advanced pipe welding, Shaffer said.

BC3's welding certificate program "has helped tremendously by providing me with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the work force," Bowman said. "There are new hires at my company that attended different trade schools and don't have the same knowledge of metallurgy and blueprint reading or know the same tips and tricks that I learned through the BC3 course."

Grad: "You're definitely in good hands at BC3"

Bowman said he had no knowledge about welding prior to taking BC3's certificate program.

"At the start of the program I struggled," he said. "Welding isn't easy. It takes skill. You have to stick with it, remain patient. If you apply yourself, you will get better, and once you're certified, there are plenty of opportunities to explore. You're definitely in good hands at BC3. They helped me go from someone who knew nothing about welding, who wasn't even mechanically inclined, to becoming a certified welder building nuclear-powered warships for the United States Navy."

The certificate is also stackable into BC3's 30-credit technical trades-applied technology certificate.

For more information, visit bc3.edu/welding, or contact Kelly (Jordan) McKissick at 724-287-8711. ext. 8171 or email Kelly.Jordan@bc3.edu.

Information on loans for professional certification programs can be obtained at SallieMae.com/SmartDecision.